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LETTERS
ON
MEDICAL EDUCATION,

(ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE MONTREAL GAZETTE,)

ADDRESSED TO THE

MEMBERS

OF THE

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE OF CANADA.

BY ARCHIBALD HALL, M. D.

MONTREAL:
ARMOUR & RAMSAY.
KINGSTON:
RAMSAY, ARMOUR, & Co.

1842.



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MEDICAL EDUCATION.

LETTER I.

TO THE HONOURABLE, THE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
AND OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

GENTLEMEN,

WITH the termination of the first Provincial Parliament of United Canada, has closed one of the most important Sessions which it has, probably, ever been the lot of British North America to witness—important, as well in reference to the number of Bills which have been submitted to your deliberations, as to the nature of the Bills themselves ; and it is the earnest desire of every true patriot, that He who disposeth all things for the good of his creatures, will, by his providential care, so overrule these, the result of your counsels, that they may work together for the happiness and prosperity of this country, the brightest gem in Her Majesty's diadem.

Numerous and highly important as were the measures which were perfected, that, I am happy to say, of education was not neglected : it received at your hands that attention which its extreme importance demanded ; satisfied that knowledge is power, and that for elevating and dignifying the character of a nation, all that is requisite is to cultivate the moral attributes and mental faculties of the rising generation, as the foundation of a moral and intellectual superstructure. That a necessity existed for such a measure, no one denied ; of the manner, however, in which it was to be carried into effect, some discrepancies

of opinion existed, a virtual demonstration of a familiarity or acquaintance with the subject, on the part of all, manifesting itself according to the habits of thought of the individual's mind.

Closely allied to this subject, is another, which was also brought under your consideration, namely, Medical Education. To establish this highly important object on a proper foundation, a Bill was introduced by the Honourable Member for the County of Terrebonne, embodying in its detail a plan, which, it was thought, would have been acceptable to the medical profession generally. Having been referred to a Committee, it was so essentially altered in its features, as, to a great extent, to negative any useful results which might have been anticipated from it. In this modified shape, however, from some want of technical formality, the Bill was, subsequently, thrown out by the House of Assembly: and here the matter meanwhile rests. We cannot but congratulate the profession generally, and even the public, also, on such a result; for while, on the one hand, the interests of the British medical profession here have been materially served by the rejection, on the other, it has given time for a maturer consideration of the points involved in its details, and, in either case, will have been productive of good.

The interests of the medical profession, being of a special character, can scarcely be expected to be understood by the Members of the House generally; consequently, the writer of the present, and succeeding series of letters, hopes that he will not be accused either of vanity or presumption, in laying before you an impartial account of the present state of the medical profession in this country, its wishes, and its wants; fully persuaded, that with you, and you alone, as the only legally constituted authority, rests the power, and, he also feels satisfied, the inclination, to rectify abuses, where these are shown to exist, and to ameliorate and to improve, when circumstances demand it.

It is with extreme diffidence that the writer thus ventures before you and the public. The subject, however, is one of such immense importance, that the task, though an exceedingly invidious one, must

be executed by somebody. He has patiently waited for some abler pen to take the field, but has been disappointed. Under the firm impression, that another Bill for the regulation of medical education will be introduced at the next Session of the Provincial Parliament, he conceives that at no more propitious time than the present, when the hurry and pressure of business is temporarily suspended, when you are enjoying a relaxation from private, as well as Provincial duties, could your attention be more properly directed to a subject like the present. The health and happiness of thousands are at issue, affording the most ample apology for the loss of time it may occasion you in perusing these letters.

I subscribe myself, in the meantime,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

MEDICUS.

Montreal, January 13, 1842.

LETTER II.

GENTLEMEN,

IN continuation of the subject which I proposed in my last letter to introduce to your notice, the train of argument which I am required to adopt compels me to take a short glance at the history of medicine in the early ages of the world, and to observe the manner in which its study was, in those days, prosecuted. On this subject, however, I do not intend to occupy much of your time.

Perhaps nothing is more strongly corroborative of the necessity of a proper medical education than the fact, that in all newly discovered countries, how uncivilized or savage soever the inhabitants may have been, some traces of an application to medicine have been discovered—thus demonstrating its importance and its essentiality to their happiness; the same remark equally applies to the early ages of the world. It appears, in fact, to be a natural and inevitable sequence to society of all kinds, that attempts should be made to alleviate pain, to heal wounds, and to repair the injuries to which the body is constantly incident; and however rude or imperfect the first attempts may have been, yet we always find them keeping strict progress with the advance of civilization and the march of science. In the first instances, the remedies may have been few, their application simple, and the requisite knowledge for their proper employment easily obtained; but with the progressive increase of population, and the multiplication of remedies and diseases, and the developement of fresh resources, some degree of preparation or study became requisite, not only for the proper discrimination of diseases, but also for the correct appreciation of the principles which ought to guide the practitioners in the application of their remedies.

As far back in the history of the world as authentic record carries us, we have constant proof of a devotion, more or less energetic, to the practice of medicine. In those early days, the Priests were the depositories of medical lore, a circumstance which originated among the Jews from Divine command, but which was perpetuated among them, as well as the other contemporary nations, by the superior education which this particular class received, and the consequent superior knowledge on all other subjects which they evinced. This association of Priest and Physician was by no means favourable to the advance of medicine, as a science ; the one was prostituted from its legitimate aims to secure and maintain the ascendancy of the other, and the treatment of diseases was cloaked under the most superstitious rites and ceremonies. Hitherto but little system was practised in the pursuit of medical knowledge. Attempts, indeed, were frequently and successfully made to disunite the two offices just alluded to, and, although we find in these early periods of medical history, a name, here and there, who struck out a new path for himself, yet the mass of practitioners blindly followed in the footsteps of their predecessors—gleaning their information as best they could. About 300 years B. C. the importance of studying medicine, on a proper system, was acknowledged in the foundation of the first school at Alexandria, through the munificence of the Ptolemies. Here it was taught in its various branches, and here some of the most illustrious men, whose names adorn the pages of medical literature, received their elementary instruction. We have not, at the present day, any means of ascertaining the exact nature of the curricula which the students had to undergo ; but we do know, that the greatest attention was paid to the study of anatomy, physiology, pathology, the *materia medica*, and the practice of medicine and surgery. Antecedently to this period, the structure of the human body was only known from analogy—from dissections of the lower animals. It was now prosecuted in its only legitimate way, the bodies of executed criminals being assigned by the Government for that purpose. As the natural result of this improved system of me-

dical tuition, and the other branches of philosophy taught in this school, a closer system of investigation was applied to the principles of medical science,—numerous sects, from time to time, sprang up, which, in enforcing their own peculiar tenets, directed general attention to the subject, and, disclosing the fallacies of their opponents, elevated, to a high degree, the medical art. For several centuries after this period, medicine was prosecuted with equal ardour in the Arabian and Saracenic schools, and, imitating the example set by Alexandria, we have the names of the Neapolitan Colleges of Monte Cassino and Salerno, both of which acquired some degree of eminence. From the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, what have been emphatically called the dark ages, set in—a period in which, to use the language of a celebrated writer of the present day, “ignorance, superstition, and barbarism tyrannised over learning and genius,—in which knowledge of any kind was to be sought for only among the ruins of old churches and monasteries,—in which fabulous legends supplied the place of truth, and the arts of a crafty priesthood debased, while they enslaved, the minds of men.” Aided, in the first instance, by the Crusades, then by the Reformation, but, above all, by the discovery of the art of printing, an art “which derides the havoc of time and barbarism,” medicine, together with the other branches of knowledge, revived from the flagging state in which it had lately existed, and a re-action, more than proportionate to its previous depression, took place,—schools were established in most of the principal cities, among others in Montpellier, Bologna, Vienna, Padua, Pavia, Milan, Rome, Naples, Paris, and last, and by no means least, in Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Dublin.

I seek not, Gentlemen, to draw any unfair inference from the facts just adduced; but I must fearlessly record my firm conviction, that it is to these schools, and these only, with the perpetuation of this mode of teaching medicine, that we must attribute the present exalted state of medical science. Their beneficial effects were soon apparent. The rivalry which quickly manifested itself,—the fame which each was desirous of acquiring, instigated to close investigation of the nature

and treatment of diseases ; a result, which, in its turn, tended to a fuller and more exact developement of medical principles,—to its consolidation, as a science,—and to a removal of the numerous errors which entrammelled it.

Medicine, as a science, at the present day, is by no means what it was even a few centuries ago, and it is, consequently, by no means necessary to the object which we have in view, to inquire into the nature, degree, or extent, of the initiatory studies requisite for its successful practice in those days. But if proper initiatory instruction was then required, on the part of all who wished to enter upon its duties, as is proved by the establishment of schools, it is even still more so now, when the requisite attainments are of a much higher order. What these are, will be seen by inspecting the curricula of the principal schools of Europe, which I reserve as the material for my next letter.

I remain,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

MEDICUS.

Montreal, January 19, 1842.

LETTER III.

GENTLEMEN,

THE importance of pursuing the study of medicine, on a proper system, being established in the foundation of schools, where its principles may be taught and its doctrines inculcated, and this from early ages of the world, we shall conclude this part of our subject, by inquiring into the nature of the curricula required of young men entering into that profession, in some of the principal Colleges of Europe, namely, Edinburgh, London, Dublin, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and St. Andrews. I would willingly have extended this sketch to the German schools of medicine, but having no certain data at my command, with respect to them, I am disposed to pass them over. I must, however, state, that the curricula demanded at any of these, do not differ materially from those of Edinburgh or London, and where differences do exist, they will be found in the requirement of increased qualifications.

Independently of classical knowledge, and hospital attendance, varying in time from one to three years, the candidates for degrees are expected to give satisfactory evidence of knowledge on the following subjects, namely :—

Anatomy, Chemistry,
Materia Medica, Pharmacy,
Therapeutics, Physiology,
Theory and Practice of Medicine,
The Principles and Practice of Surgery,
Midwifery, and Diseases of Women and Children,
Pathology, Botany, Natural History,
Medical Jurisprudence and Police,
Military Surgery,
Mathematics, Natural and Moral Philosophy.

He is also obliged to furnish tickets on Practical Anatomy, Practical Chemistry, Clinical Medicine, and Clinical Surgery. Some of these classes are dispensed with in some of the Colleges, especially those not *immediately* bearing on the practical parts of the profession, such as Botany, Natural History, and Mechanical Philosophy; but the list above given, may be taken as a sample of the curriculum, and the amount of knowledge required.

The least time during which the students are permitted to acquire this information, is four years,—that is, four winter sessions, of six months each, during which lectures on these various branches are delivered, at least five times in the week. The longest period of study enjoined is twelve years; at the expiration of either of which periods or terms, according to the respective Colleges which enjoin them, the candidates are admitted to the highest degree in medicine, M.D., on satisfactory examination of their qualifications, and the writing of a Thesis, which is made to undergo a public defence, on the part of its author.

At the University of Oxford, the preliminary degrees of B.A., M.A., and M.B., are first required, before the degree of M.D. can be obtained. The degree of B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) requires a four years' study; in the course of two years afterwards, that of M.A. (Master of Arts) is obtained; at the expiration of another year's study, the candidate is admitted as M.B. (Bachelor of Medicine); and not until three years are completed, is the degree of M.D. (Doctor of Medicine) conferred, and these after four separate examinations for the respective degrees.

At the University of Cambridge, a somewhat similar plan is pursued, a ten years' term of study being also requisite.

In the University of Dublin, the preliminary degrees of A.B. and A.M. are not requisite, though the possessors of these degrees enjoy superior advantages. The previous possession of the degree of M.B., however, is imperative, before that of M.D. can be obtained; those who hold the degree of A.M., can obtain that of M.D. after six years' study; those holding that of A.B., not until after seven; while those

who hold neither, are obliged to prosecute their studies for twelve years.

At the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen, the possession of the preliminary degree of A.M. is imperative; while in that of St. Andrews, its possession is recommended, though not absolutely enjoined.

At Paris, the degree of Bachelor of Letters is enjoined, before that of Doctor in Medicine, or Doctor in Surgery, can be conferred.

In the other Colleges, or schools of medicine, to which reference has been made, although the possession of the degrees of A.M. or A.B. is not demanded, yet it is obvious, on inspecting the curricula required of the students, that the object has been to compel on them as extensively diversified attainments as possible, and to enforce an acquaintance with the collateral branches of medical science, which, though they may prove of but little value at the bedsides of the sick, yet elevate and adorn the medical character.

Leaving the Eastern, let us now direct our attention to the Western Hemisphere, and, taking, as our guide, the curricula required at any of the *respectable* medical schools of the Union (for they are not all so), we shall find them closely following in the footsteps, and imitating the example, of their British ancestors. From three to four years' study is required, and collegiate instruction rendered imperative. The nature of the studies is more purely medical, and, except in one or two instances, an acquaintance with Natural Philosophy, Botany, or any other collateral branch, is not enjoined. Although graduation does not permit the holder of the degree to enter into immediate practice, yet in the greater number of the States, its previous possession is imperative, before the license "*ad practicandum*" is granted, as it is a *prima facie* evidence of the fitness of the individual for the duties in which he is to engage.

Some of you, Gentlemen, are members of the medical profession, and are, consequently, familiar with the nature and extent of the preliminary studies requisite for practising it in a proper manner. The greater portion are not acquainted with these facts, and to these the

statements which have been made, may appear novel, but if so, not the less true. Accustomed, as we all are, from our very infancy, to see ignorant pretenders, of all classes, sexes, and ages, tampering with diseases, and employing remedies of various descriptions, according as their own whims or fancies may direct, occasionally innocuous, generally dangerous in such hands, for "fools rush in where angels fear to tread," the mass of mankind are prone to regard medical knowledge as a thing easily acquired, requiring no particular skill in the application of its remedies, and a smaller quantum of brains for its acquisition, than probably any other profession. The deception, let me assure you, is an exceedingly gross one, and involves in its consequences the most alarming, the most pernicious, effects. We have seen that years of arduous, laborious study are necessary for the acquisition of its principles; and when we reflect for one moment on the multiplicity of diseases to which the human frame is incident, the Protean variety of their symptoms, and the frequent calls which are made upon the sound judgment, and prompt suggestions of the Physician, whose mind must be prepared for every emergency, no other arguments, I feel convinced, are necessary to prove the extreme importance of a proper elementary instruction. We acknowledge the necessity of due preparatory instruction in the other two professions, and descending from these, in the various mechanical pursuits which give occupation to so many thousands of our tradesmen and others, and yet in the medical profession, the practice of which is so closely interwoven with our dearest interests, and which involves a greater amount of human happiness or misery than any, or the whole of these put together, the preliminary acquisition of its principles has hitherto appeared in this country, to be a matter of no consequence whatever. But I am anticipating.

I remain,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

MEDICUS.

Montreal, January 24, 1842.

LETTER IV.

GENTLEMEN,

THE course of my subject brings me now to the consideration of the present state of medicine in this country, by far the most ungracious part of the task, which may lay me open to imputations of various kinds; and although the circumstances, which, in illustration of my position, I am compelled to state, may prove unpalatable to a myriad of demi-Doctors, the outpourings of whose wrath it is no difficult matter to predict, yet the cause in which I am writing—a cause involving the sacred interests of humanity—urges me to the duty. I shall, however, make no assertions, but shall appeal to facts, and shall state the truth, irrespective of persons, and fearless of consequences.

We have seen, in the last two letters, the care which has been evinced, from very early ages of the world, to secure to young men that knowledge of their profession, which would enable them to undertake the practical duties of it, with credit and honour to themselves, and benefit to the sick entrusted to their charge. Scholastic education has been shewn to possess the sanction of antiquity, a fact which is, at the same time, virtually demonstrative of the insufficiency or inadequacy of all other modes of imparting the requisite degree of initiatory instruction. We have seen the system practised in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and the United States, and, in fact, in every other civilized nation under the sun. Let us now look homewards, and see how far we keep up with this spirit of improvement, in inculcating the principles of the medical profession, in the only manner the utility of which has received the confirmation of the experience of ages.

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The Ordinance which at present regulates the practice (there is none regulating the study) of medicine in this Province, is the 28th Geo. III. cap. 8, the object of which is, "to prevent persons practising Physic or Surgery within the Province of Quebec, or Midwifery in the towns of Quebec or Montreal, without a license." It prescribes an examination, before a Medical Board, of all, except those who hold a degree from "any University," which, according to the opinion of the Attorney-General, refers exclusively to British diplomas, or have been commissioned or warranted as Surgeons in Her Majesty's Army or Navy, and exempts altogether from the necessity of obtaining a license, the Physicians or Surgeons of Her Majesty's Army or Navy, on active service within the Province. It prescribes no particular time, nor does it indicate any particular course of study; in fine, according to the Ordinance, the time of study may be either six days or six years,—the candidate for license may be either six years old, or sixty; its whole requirements being, that he present himself before one of the Medical Boards of the Province, and if he replies to the few questions proposed to him, which chance may so direct as to be on subjects with which he may be, to a certain extent, familiar, he *must* be received.*

But the working of this system is best seen by those who compose the Medical Boards of the Province. To them it is notorious, that the candidates come before them with the *minimum* quantity of knowledge, requisite to enable them to pass. There have been a few honourable exceptions to this statement, but they are so few, as to corroborate the fact, rather than invalidate it. Nor is it at all surprising. Apprenticed, as I grant they usually are, a circumstance the result of custom, more than of necessity, they are admitted to the privilege of compounding

* This is so literally true, that presenting before the Medical Boards, has been, by students, proverbially termed, "taking their chance."

The stigma of passing improperly educated persons, might, by some, be attached to the Boards of the Province; but, we must observe, that these Boards have not the power of either elevating or demanding a high standard of medical acquirements. They may demand, but whence are these attainments to be derived? The faulty system of education, compels the reception of inferior qualifications, which, though the Boards may regret, for many and obvious reasons, they cannot prevent.

formulæ, which is the source of all their knowledge in Pharmacy and the *Materia Medica*; their knowledge of Chemistry, gleaned from books, and practically exemplified, to a certain extent, in the way just specified, is as meagre as can possibly be, in most cases, amounting to the grossest ignorance of its simplest principles; their knowledge of Anatomy, studied from books, aided by a few plates, as old and antique as may well be imagined, serves them to know, at best, the carotid artery from the femoral, and is utterly unfit for assisting them in the performance of any, the most trifling, operation in Surgery. Their knowledge of Medicine and Surgery, derived from the same source, however well stored with theory their minds may be, renders them worse than useless at the bedsides of the sick, from a deficiency of practical information, and serves to confuse, more than enlighten, as to the nature and proper treatment of the disease before them. The other branches of medicine, as Therapeutics, Physiology, Pathology, &c., are laid aside, as requirements by no means necessary to enable them to pass, and as fit subjects for study at future periods, which very frequently never arrive.

Such, Gentlemen, in a few words, is by no means an over-drawn picture of the present standard of medical knowledge in this country. So far as regards the mass of medical men who receive students, such a result is not common. Here and there, however, it must be confessed, one is to be found, who endeavours to remedy these defects in the tuition of his apprentice or student; but it would require more time than the very best of this second class can afford, to bestow even an approach to what would be considered, even by himself, as a proper medical education. What facilities can he have for Dissection? what, for the illustration of Chemistry? what, in fact, for any other of even the least important branches of the science? None, none whatever. His whole time is engrossed in his own private practice. If he can bestow any on his student, it is but a fraction, too trifling to notice, and, as is far too frequently the case, the students pursue their studies, and glean their information, according to the dictates of their own judgment or inclination. This, I must observe, is no fault

of either master or pupil, but it resides in the deficiency of proper legislative enactments, which, while they ought to regulate the studies preliminary to the practice of one of the most important professions which exists, a profession which involves in the prosecution of its duties, a greater amount of human happiness than any other, should, at the same time, put it out of the power of every one to usurp, or undertake, an initiatory instruction, which he has not the means, or the power, of completing as it ought to be.

But on whom do the evils which are thus necessarily attendant on this imperfect system of education, devolve? The answer is a plain one. There is no class of society, however elevated it may be, which may not, does not, feel its influence. Its pernicious effects are rampant through the land, throughout its length and its breadth; and though by no means unfelt in the cities, in the country it commits its direst ravages. Humanity sickens at the accounts sometimes brought from these quarters. At one time, we hear of a man literally bleeding to death unaided, (a medical man having been actually called in!) from a wound in the leg, by a scythe, a result which the timely exhibition of the slightest surgical skill, might have prevented! At another, we hear of an amputation at the thigh, for the cure of an aneurism in the ham, and this in lieu of the more delicate operation of tying the femoral artery a little above it, an operation which might have saved the unfortunate individual's limb! At another, we hear of a blister having been applied to a strangulated inguinal hernia, for the relief of the inflammatory symptoms which had set in, as the inevitable result of the strangulation. This individual died in the course of twelve hours afterwards! And more lately still, of an operation to remove a tumour of the abdomen, which was caused by an enlarged stomach, from organic disease. The abdomen was actually cut into, and the mistake was not discovered, until the shining peritoneal coat of the stomach presented itself to view!! This cost the poor woman her life, and is now furnishing the groundwork for a legal prosecution. But what pecuniary consideration can recompense for the loss of those who are near, and dear, to us? Can our affections be bought for silver or gold?

or can these afford the slightest consolation to our wounded, lacerated feelings? We shudder, Gentlemen—our best feelings revolt, at the cruelties which we see so frequently inflicted on the poor dumb, defenceless creatures which surround us; cruelties which are literally nothing, to the wholesale licensed murder of our own species, tolerated in this country.

I subscribe myself,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

MEDICUS.

Montreal, January 27, 1842.

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LETTER V.

GENTLEMEN,

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IN my last letter, I exhibited a plain, unvarnished picture of the present state of medicine in this country, and showed up the system, of which it is the practical working, in its naked deformity. Much more might have been written ; but the subject is one so revolting to all the finer feelings of our nature, that enough, and probably more than enough, has been said to prove the object which I had in view, namely, the present extremely degraded state of medicine in this country.

But has there never been an attempt made to ameliorate this melancholy state of things,—to diffuse abroad a spirit more congenial to improvement,—to rescue medicine from the low state into which it had sunk,—and to lessen the evils consequent upon a worse than imperfect system of education ? Yes, Gentlemen, such an attempt was made. About fifteen or twenty years ago, a few medical gentlemen of this city, aware of the unfortunate occurrences which were daily taking place, and recognising the source whence they originated, deeply impressed with the necessity of causing the study of medicine to be prosecuted in its only legitimate manner, the utility of which had been tested by nearly twenty-two centuries' experience, and of the benefits of which they had themselves been participators, associated themselves together, under the name of the "Medical Institution," and publicly delivered lectures on the various branches of medical education. Far from meeting with that support which was so justly their due,—far from being, in the slightest degree, assisted in their arduous undertaking, an undertaking involving an immensity of labour, and no

profit whatever (their receipts being frequently, at the end of the year, insufficient to cover their expenses), they have been stigmatised as exclusives, and have encountered the most untiring opposition. Into the causes of this opposition, causes which would willingly, at the time, have sacrificed at the shrine of their gratification the best and most beneficent intentions, I wish not now to enquire; I desire not to rake up the smouldering embers of political animosity, and re-kindle a fire, which, I fain hope, has now nearly, if not altogether, expired. The Medical Institution, however, merged eventually into the McGill College,—still holds its ground,—and must, at last, triumph over the countless obstacles, which have hitherto, but ineffectually, attempted to oppose its prosperity. It may be here not irrelevant to mention the curriculum required by the rules of this College, as it is the only chartered Institution in British North America, which professedly imparts a medical education.

The candidate for the degree, which is that of Doctor of Medicine and Surgery, must have attained the age of twenty-one years, and afford satisfactory proof of classical attainments, and must furnish testimonials of having attended, during at least three years, courses on the following branches of medical education:—

Anatomy and Physiology; Chemistry and Pharmacy; Theory and Practice of Medicine; Midwifery, and Diseases of Women and Children; Surgery; Materia Medica, and Therapeutics; Clinical Medicine and Surgery—*Two six-month courses each.*

Institutes of Medicine; Practical Anatomy—*One six-month course each.*

Hospital Attendance—*During, at least, two years.*

He is also required to compose a Thesis on some medical subject, at his own option, which is publicly defended, on a day set apart for that especial purpose.

It will be observed, on examining this curriculum, that the nature of the required studies is *purely* medical, none of the collateral branches, which swell out the curricula of the principal Colleges of Great

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Britain, and of some in the United States, being enjoined, while all those classes are rendered imperative, the principles of which are called into every day operation. In a young and rising Colony, no more than this can, or ought, to be demanded; but this much should be. The object sought for, is to elevate the standard of medical knowledge,—to impart useful, not ornamental, education,—to unfold the principles of medical science to all who feel disposed to take advantage of the opportunity thus offered,—and to afford no longer a plea, or an excuse, for the criminal ignorance of them, which was so conspicuous every where. But although the means of acquiring a rudimentary knowledge of their profession was thus placed within the reach of all, experience has amply proved the lamentable fact, that although a few do avail themselves of the privileges thus opened to them, yet the mass of young men entering the profession, prefer the imperfect system prescribed by the law, to collegiate education, which would entail the trifling outlay of a few pounds. As long as collegiate education is not rendered imperative, so long will this system be persevered in, a system which perpetuates a degree of ignorance more befitting the untutored savages of a newly discovered clime, or the semi-barbarism of antediluvian periods, than the vaunted civilization of a Christian country, in the nineteenth century.

But, Gentlemen, in 1831, the Provincial Legislature of Lower Canada, took the matter up; and let us now see what they made of it. In that year, an Act was passed—27th Will. IV. Cap. 1—entituled “An Act to repeal a certain Act therein mentioned, and to provide more effectual regulations concerning the practice of Physic, Surgery, and Midwifery.” One would almost have supposed, that a modern Legislature, careful of the interests of the constituents, by whom they were returned as Members, and necessarily cognizant of the innumerable evils which flowed from the deficient state of medical education, would, in proposing a remedy for a disease, pregnant with such disastrous consequences, have devised the means of at once eradicating the complaint, by enforcing a strict compliance with a proper preparatory instruction, on the part of all who wished to enter upon its duties. In

reading over the Act, however, the most careless observer cannot but be struck with the culpable indifference displayed on this point. While the greatest care seems to have been taken to make the Medical Boards of the Province elective (than which no method could possibly have been selected more open to abuse, especially with respect to talent, and that, too, in a situation where it is so much needed); while it takes especial care to impose penalties on all persons practising without a license, and in this manner protects their own ignorant pretenders from the encroachments of their, too frequently, more skillful, but unlicensed, opponents; while the most stringent regulations are made in reference to the poor apothecaries, and ample care is taken that they receive a proper preliminary education (of the same nature as that for the physician!—the only difference in the education of the two being, that the former has to serve a three years', the latter a five years', apprenticeship); the very object which ought to have been steadily kept in view,—the all-important subject, which should to have constituted the main feature of the Bill, a proper system of initiatory instruction, is studiously avoided.

Nor, Gentlemen, can we be at the slightest loss in assigning a reason for this seeming negligence, for it is only seeming. The Legislature well knew, that in rendering collegiate instruction imperative, they would have been directly advancing the interests of the McGill College; but they, at the same time, forgot, or rather affected not to remember, the long-established commercial axiom, (and education may, in this sense, be viewed in a commercial light,) that where the demand is created, the supply speedily follows, and, consequently, that where one medical school existed, there, in no long time, might fifty have been rearing their heads. Narrow-visioned policy! which strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel,—which, while withholding a proper preliminary education, perpetuated, through its neglect, the direst consequences upon a hapless community.

To you, Gentlemen, the medical profession generally, for their own honour, and the public, also, for their own interest, anxiously look for an amelioration of this state of things. The middle of the

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nineteenth, finds the standard of medical knowledge in this country, no higher than it was in the middle of the eighteenth, century : no improvement has taken place,—not the slightest change. The attempt has been made, but, unsupported by Legislative authority, it has proved almost abortive.

The provisions of a Medical Bill, regulating the interests of the medical profession, shall form the materials of my next and last letter.

In the meantime,

Gentlemen,

I remain your most obedient, humble servant,

MEDICUS.

Montreal, February 3, 1842.

LETTER VI.

GENTLEMEN,

THE conclusion of my subject, brings me now to the consideration of the details of a Medical Bill, such a one as would accord with the feelings and necessities of the medical profession generally, and, at the same time, tend to elevate the standard of medical knowledge throughout the Province. Both the Canadas labour under similar disadvantages in this respect; consequently, the provisions of the Bill should be such as to affect both; and its title should be the following: "An Act to Regulate the Study and Practice of Physic, Surgery, and Midwifery, within the Province of Canada."

The preamble should repeal all existing laws or Acts which at present affect the study or practice of the same within the Province, especially 28th Geo. III. cap. 8, which bears on the practice in Lower Canada, and 59th Geo. III. cap. 13, 59th Geo. III. cap. 2, and 8th Geo. IV. cap. 3, which influence it in Upper Canada.

Sec. 2.—A competent classical education to be imperative on every one desiring to practice as a Physician, Surgeon, Man-Midwife, or Apothecary.

Sec. 3.—No person to be admitted to examination for license to practice as a Physician, Surgeon, Man-Midwife, or Apothecary, unless he has attained the age of twenty-one years.

Sec. 4.—All persons desiring to practice as Physicians, Surgeons, or Man-Midwives, must submit to an examination, before a Medical Board, on the following subjects: Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Materia Medica, Therapeutics, Theory and Practice of Medicine, Principles and Practice of Surgery, Midwifery, and Diseases of Women and Children.

Sec. 5.—All persons desiring to practice as an Apothecary, must submit to an examination before a Medical Board on the following subjects: *Materia Medica*, *Pharmacy*, and the *Principles of Chemistry*.

Sec. 6.—For the provisions of this Act, Medical Boards to be appointed by the Governor-General, or person administering the Government for the time being, in the cities of Toronto, Kingston, Montreal, and Quebec.

Sec. 7.—The Medical Boards to consist of, at least, nine Medical practitioners, five of whom shall constitute a quorum. To meet, at least, once every three months, after a fortnight's notification of the same, in, at least, two papers published in the respective cities. Their duties shall be to examine the testimonials and qualifications of every person wishing to practice within the Province as a Physician, Surgeon, or Man-Midwife, every person desiring to practice as an Apothecary, and all women desiring to practice as Midwives; and if, on examination, they shall be found duly qualified for the discharge of the duties of the respective offices which they wish to practice, a certificate to that effect shall be granted to them, to be confirmed as a license by the Governor-General, under his hand and seal.

Sec. 8.—Successful candidates shall pay a fee of £1, to the Secretary of the Board, to assist in defraying the incidental expenses of the Board.

Sec. 9.—Exempts from examination by the Medical Boards, all persons holding a diploma or degree from any British University or College; all persons holding a diploma or warrant in Her Majesty's Army or Navy; and all Army and Navy Physicians or Surgeons on active duty within the Province.

Sec. 10.—All persons wishing to practice as a Physician, Surgeon, or Man-Midwife, shall serve an apprenticeship of, at least, three years, with some licensed medical practitioner, and shall adduce testimonials of attendance on the following branches of medical study, the courses of which shall have endured for, at least, four months, and the number of lectures, at least, five during the week: Two courses of Ana-

tomy and Physiology, two of Chemistry and Pharmacy, two of *Materia Medica* and Therapeutics, two of Surgery, two of Theory and Practice of Medicine, two of Obstetrics, and two of Practical Anatomy, with Hospital attendance during, at least, two Academic years, the Hospital containing, at least, forty beds.

Sec. 11.—All persons wishing to practice as Apothecary, shall serve an apprenticeship of, at least, three years, with some licensed Medical practitioner or Apothecary, and shall adduce testimonials of attendance on the following classes, the duration being, at least, four months, and the number of weekly lectures, at least, five: One course of Chemistry and Pharmacy, one course of *Materia Medica*.

Sec. 12.—No person to practice Physic, Surgery, or Midwifery, within the Province, without a license, under a penalty of £10 for the first offence, and £20 for every succeeding one.

Sec. 13.—No person to vend medicine as an Apothecary, without license, except in the instance of patent medicines, under a penalty of £10 for the first offence, and £15 for every subsequent one.

Sec. 14.—No female to practice as a Midwife, without a license, under a penalty of £5 for the first offence, and £7 10s. for every subsequent one.

Sec. 15.—No Apothecary to vend any adulterated medicines, or medicines which shall not be genuine, under a penalty of £5 for the first offence, and £10 for every subsequent one.

Sec. 16.—No Apothecary to vend any poisonous substances, such as corrosive sublimate, arsenic, laudanum, and the like, unless the person requiring the same, produce, from a Clergyman, Physician, or other respectable inhabitant of the place in which he resides, a certificate, stating the name, residence, and occupation, of the person requiring it, under a penalty of £2 10s. for the first offence, and £5 for every subsequent one.

Sec. 17.—All Apothecaries to keep poisonous substances in coloured bottles, with the word "Poison," in large letters, marked thereon, under a penalty of £2 10s. for the first offence, and £5 for every subsequent one.

Sec. 18.—No person whatever, under any pretence, to inoculate any child or adult with the natural virus of the small-pox, unless after previous vaccination with cow-pox virus, under a penalty of £5 for the first offence, and £7 10s. for every subsequent one.

Sec. 19.—To facilitate the study of Anatomy, all dead bodies unclaimed by friends or relatives, within three days, from the month of November to May, and within two days, from the month of May to November, whether dying in Hospitals, Jails, or other public Institutions, or found dead, publicly exposed, to be given up to a public lecturer on Anatomy, for the purposes of dissection; and that a warrant, signed by a Justice of the Peace, in favour of the applicant for the same, addressed to the Coroner of the District, or chief officer of the Hospital, Jail, or public Institution, be sufficient to obtain it.

Sec. 20.—The penalties imposed in this Act to be recovered by the deposition of, at least, two witnesses, before any of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, within, at least, three months after the commission of the offence, with imprisonment until the fine is paid; one moiety of the fine to be given to the informants, the other moiety to be the property of Her Majesty, her heirs, and successors.

Sec. 21.—This Act to remain in force, until repealed by a subsequent Act of the Legislature.

A few comments on some of the sections of this proposed Bill, and I shall conclude.

Section 9.—I should scarcely have deemed it necessary to make the slightest allusion to this section, had not the proposal been seriously entertained by several Members, to admit American diplomas into this country on a par with British ones,—that is, without subjecting the parties holding them to an examination. The impropriety and the impolicy of such a measure, could be clearly demonstrated to every unbiassed mind, did not the already too great length of this letter warn me to be brief. I may, however, advance several arguments, without entering into explanatory details. In the first place: Although a few American Colleges do impart a complete system of medical in-

struction, yet the generality of them do not, and this remark especially applies to all the Border Universities (?), those which would most certainly be visited by our students, from their proximity and cheapness. A number of graduates from these Universities, as they style themselves, have applied for license to the Montreal Medical Board, and the records shew the rejection of a large numerical majority, from utter ignorance of the simplest principles of the profession, and consequent incompetency. Secondly: A chartered College exists within the Colony, fully capable of imparting the requisite degree of elementary knowledge; and in no long time, others would be established also. It has been objected to the McGill College, that the lectures are in the English language, and, consequently, are not comprehended by the Canadians. To expose the frivolousness of this objection, it is, I think, sufficient to observe, that the classes this winter shew a large majority of Canadians among the gentlemen attending them, who have thus voluntarily come forward. Thirdly: The protective arm of the Legislature, which ought to foster their own Institutions, and hold out no inducement to seek that instruction in a foreign country, which their own is fully capable of imparting to, at least, an equal, if not a superior, degree. Fourthly: The usage of almost all Governments, which recognise as valid no diplomas but their own. Three gentlemen holding the McGill College diploma, are now practising in Louisiana, United States, and all the three had not only to take the oath of allegiance, but to submit to an examination before the Medical Board in that State; and, in 1838, five English Physicians were put on their trial at Boulogne, for practising without a license, and condemned to the payment of a trifling fine, equivalent to an interdiction. According to this decision, no foreign Physician can practice in France at all, unless he undergoes an examination before the Faculty of Physicians at Paris.

Section 18.—The best directed efforts to suppress this loathsome and fatal disease, will be utterly unavailing, as long as the practice of inoculating is permitted to continue. It has been made the subject of

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Legislative interference in the Imperial Parliament ; and the penalties of the Statute were actually imposed on one medical man, who contravened its enactments.

Section 19.—It surely requires little to be said to prove the importance of such a step as is here indicated on the part of the Legislature. If a knowledge of the functions and structure of the human frame is demanded from the Physician and Surgeon, and if an intimate acquaintance with these can only be obtained by means of dissection, measures should be adopted to secure this end, in the least offensive way possible. Such a method is adopted in Great Britain ; and, while it has been found there to subserve well the end for which it was intended, it would, if introduced into this country, also tend to obviate the disagreeable and dangerous practice, by which an imperious necessity now compels the student to acquire the material for this important branch of his studies.

I have now, Gentlemen, brought these letters to a conclusion, and leave the whole matter in your hands, under the full persuasion, that it will meet with that attention which its extreme importance demands. I have, I believe, fully demonstrated the urgent necessity of Legislative interference in establishing a higher standard of acquirements, on the part of those who intend to engage in the important duties of the medical profession. You alone, Gentlemen, have the power, and, after the arguments which have been advanced, I doubt not, the inclination. This end will be amply attained in the sketch of the Bill which I have just submitted to your calm and deliberate judgment.

In establishing some of the positions which I had to assume in the course of my argument, I was compelled to make some painful disclosures ; but, in doing so, however much I regretted the necessity, I sedulously endeavoured to appeal to facts ; and have now the satisfaction of adding, that, although nearly a fortnight has elapsed since my last two letters were publicly laid before you, not a single statement has been, either directly or indirectly, impugned. This tacit acquiescence on the part of the medical profession, in the statements

which have been made, and the inferences which have been deduced from them, cannot surely be regarded as unimportant. It has invested my feeble efforts in the cause which I have undertaken, with a corroborative influence and weight, which I scarcely permitted myself to hope they would so readily have acquired.

It remains to me, Gentlemen, to subscribe myself,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

MEDICUS.

Montreal, January 17, 1842.

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ERRATA.

Page 11, line 24, for "not until three years are completed," read, "not until three additional years are completed."

Page 16, line 22, for "for such a result is not commom," read, "such a result is not uncommon."
